




Speech By  
**Julianne Gilbert**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (3.35 pm): I rise to contribute to the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. The timing of this bill is quite pertinent, coming on the back of Clean Up Australia Day last weekend where we saw piles of rubbish cleaned up off our beaches, waterways and bushland. Included in this rubbish was single-use plastics.

Queensland is a beautiful place to live and we want the best for our environment. Over the years there has been reporting in the media about large and micro plastics that have ended up swirling in our oceans killing off our sea life. I am proud to say that many food operators in my region, including school tuckshops, have already stopped using plastic drinking straws. It is a simple step to take to decrease the number of straws potentially making their way into our oceans which can be particularly lethal for our turtles.

Grace, Blaize and Patrick, students in year 2/3 at Fitzgerald State School in 2018, were part of the Erupting Minds class. They wrote to me asking for assistance to ban plastic drinking straws. I send a shout-out to their teachers, Mrs Ebert and Ms Humphreys. Three years ago they were trailblazers. Congratulations, kids, this bill is for you.

Single-use plastics have been an easy fix for packaging and utensils in our fast-paced, modern world. We use them once and we toss them away. It has become a lifestyle. We know we need to take pressure off our environment if we are going to pass our planet on to the next generation in a condition that is healthy and not sinking in unwanted rubbish. We have the knowledge, the feedstock and the capability to change the type of materials that we use in the production of single-use products. We can use alternative materials that break down and are fully compostable. We can use feedstock that is already grown in Queensland to manufacture materials that are renewable and give an added income stream to our agricultural producers.

This bill creates a market for single-use plastic items to be made from alternative materials. We can produce single-use plates, bowls, cutlery, straws and stirrers from sugar cane and other crops produced in Queensland. Local, state and national governments in Australia and around the world have identified that there are significant environmental, community and economic impacts associated with plastics in the environment, with over 60 countries now having some form of ban or intervention for single-use plastic items.

This bill supports the broader principles of the Queensland government's Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy released in July 2019 and the aims of the *Tackling plastic waste: Queensland's plastic pollution reduction plan*. Queensland businesses can take the opportunity to be leaders in the production of the products that consumers in Australia and internationally are seeking to replace single-use plastic items.

The member for Kawana might be interested to know that in my region of Mackay entrepreneurs are already developing from the sugarcane crop products to replace single-use plastics. Sugar cane is an interesting crop. It can be used to make many materials other than sucrose. Bagasse is a product

from the milling of cane that can be used to make biodegradable food trays. In Mackay entrepreneurs have already tested such a food tray that you can place food in and then freeze. That same tray of food can then be defrosted in the fridge and cooked in the oven. That could mean no more polystyrene trays. I am sure that they could make drinking straws that will not collapse for the member for Kawana. He might like to come to Mackay and look at the work that they are doing.

This bill is a win for the environment. It is also a win for manufacturing and job opportunities in my region and across Queensland into the future. I commend the bill to the House.